

MANUFACTURING EXTENSION PARTNERSHIP

Success Stories from the Field

EZ Roll Lakeshore Equipment Inc

Minnesota Technology Inc.

Ez Roll Sets Sail On A Lean Transformation Journey

Client Profile:

EZ Roll Systems, Inc. manufactures high-end waterfront products and equipment—specializing in aluminum sectional and roll-in docks, steel roll-in docks and marinas, aluminum and steel floating docks, boat and pontoon lifts, pontoon trailers, personal watercraft lifts and swim rafts—that are distributed throughout the United States and Canada. The second-generation, family-owned business currently occupies 30,000 square feet with room for expansion in three buildings in the central Minnesota city of Detroit Lakes and employs 20 people.

Situation:

EZ Roll's corporate executives knew the company needed to become more efficient, productive, nimble, and profitable to succeed in today's more competitive market. Acting on the advice of the local Small Business Development Center, EZ Roll called Minnesota Technology, Inc. (MTI), a NIST MEP network affiliate, in late 2001 for specific, one-on-one help in developing a strategic business plan for future success. MTI assistance included increasing EZ Roll's dealer network, internet sales, and production capacity while reducing costs and lead times.

Solution:

MTI conducted a marketing assessment and provided strategies on how sales could be increased through a variety of selling techniques, followed by a financial assessment to identify trends and establish a baseline to support future business decisions. MTI also conducted a web site assessment, followed by a series of assessments to prioritize and develop implementation plans for future success.

MTI worked with the West Central Initiative Fund-Fergus Falls, to provide lean manufacturing and visual workplace organization training. EZ Roll's entire workforce participated and became very active in implementing lean manufacturing principles to increase profitability through lower material and labor costs, improve customer service through a shorter production cycle, and expand the company's capacity for long-term growth.

MTI then conducted a three-day Visual Workplace Organization service to help transform the entire workplace into an organized, efficient, and safe environment driven by visual controls, which provided an excellent opportunity for concurrently implementing two other lean practices: improvement of the factory floor layout by moving from departmental (process) to cellular

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(product) layout, and implementation of replenishment pull inventory control system.

MTI is now assisting the company in developing a new generation product design concept that is superior to competitor's products.

Results:

Expanding dealer network from 25 to 40 within 12 months.

Increased internet sales dramatically from 2001 to 2002.

Relocated and organized equipment and workstations along product lines, rather than process departments.

Generated a \$100,000 cost savings in inventory, labor, and material.

Created three jobs.

Increased shop productivity and production capacity by 50 percent.

Testimonial:

"Prior to our involvement with Minnesota Technology, Inc., EZ Roll had operated without a specific plan or direction. MTI has helped us in many different areas and definitely helped transform and maintain EZ Roll's position as a premiere provider of lakefront equipment."

Larry Leitheiser, Corporate Officer